Week 1: Information Architecture

Information Architecture (often abbreviated "I.A.") is the practice of structuring information (knowledge or data).[1]

There are two essential concepts to keep in mind when designing your own IA:

1. Users don't care about your org chart. [2]
2. Users don't want to think.[3]

During the course of your agency portalization we will use tools and techniques to ensure that your portalized website reflects the needs of your **users**. You will do the thinking for them, so they don't have to.

Our "Project Roles and Responsibilities" document tells you that you will need a project manager, an information architect, and a technical lead. You may be wondering where you will find your information architect. It's likely you already have someone in your agency who possesses the necessary skills: a thorough understanding of how your website meets your mission and goals; excellent verbal and written communication skills; unwavering customer focus; and an eye for organizing vast amounts of unstructured material. Meet your new information architect!

Over the course of the next 16 weeks you will be presented a number of essential IA tools and techniques, including:
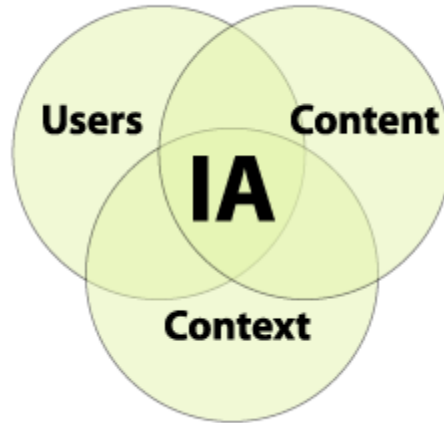
- Brainstorming
- Card sorting
- Governance
- Content inventory
- Top level navigation
- Wireframes
- Content spreadsheet – your future information architecture
- Usability
- Editorial standards
- Content conversion
- Search/metadata/findability
- Accessibility
- Marketing
- *Agency roll-ins (for EO's rolling in agencies)
- *Portal specific techniques (modules, utility pages, agency landing pages, press releases, etc.)

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[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_architecture
[2] http://www.louisrosenfeld.com/presentations/seminars/eia/
[3] http://www.sensible.com/

Information Architecture Resources for the Curious

IA is what happens in the intersection of these three elements:
1. users: (who they are, what their information-seeking behaviors and needs are)
2. content: (volume, formats, metadata, structure, organization)
3. context: (business model, business value, politics, culture, resources and resource constraints)

Books

Information Architecture for the World Wide Web: Designing Large-Scale Web Sites
by Louis Rosenfeld, Peter Morville

Don't Make Me Think : A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability (2nd Edition)
by Steve Krug

Websites

Digital Web Magazine is an online magazine intended for professional web designers, web developers and information architects.
http://www.digital-web.com/topics/information_architecture/

The Information Architecture Institute (formerly The Asilomar Institute for Information Architecture "AIfIA") serves to advance the design of shared information environments.
http://iainstitute.org/library/

Boxes and Arrows is devoted to the practice, innovation, and discussion of graphic design, interaction design and information architecture, large and small.
http://www.boxesandarrows.com